

## MONTANA

Hello. I am Gary Warchola, a US teaching assistant in Austria.  
I come from the state of Montana.

Even though it is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest state in size, only about a million people reside in Montana. People call Montana the Big Sky Country. To understand why, you only need to stand in the open prairie or mountains of Montana. Here, there are no buildings or structures blocking the horizon and the sky just seems bigger.

Life in Montana moves at a slower pace. People smile at each other. Walking down the streets, sometimes friends bump into each other, decide to go for coffee, or even float down the Clark Fork River in summer time.

Perhaps, the most popular destinations in Montana are its national parks. Montana shares Yellowstone Park with Wyoming and Idaho. In Yellowstone Park, the first national park in the world, visitors can watch erupting geysers including the famous Old Faithful. Yellowstone Park is one of the most active geothermal areas in the world.

Yellowstone Park also houses a wide variety of wildlife such as bears, elk, moose, bison, coyotes, birds, pronghorns, and wolves. Make sure to drive on the Beartooth Highway just outside of the park to see amazing views of the Beartooth Mountains high above the tree line.

Glacier National Park was named the Crown Jewel of the Continent. Native Americans of the Blackfeet tribe used to call the land inside Glacier Park the “backbone of the world.” Here, you can view wildlife, the spectacular peaks in the park, and even glaciers.

Flathead Lake, the largest natural freshwater lake west of the Mississippi, is a great place for boating, swimming, fishing, and many other activities in the summer.

Fort Peck Reservoir actually has more coastline than the ocean beaches of California. It’s also popular lake for fishing and boating.

Norman Maclean knew how special Montana is. He set his famous book, *A River Runs Through It*, in and around the city of Missoula. Later, *A River Runs Through It* was adapted into a well known film.

With the University of Montana in Missoula, Montana State University in Bozeman, Carol College in Helena, Montana Tech in Butte, and many more colleges throughout the state, Montana is a great place to study.

Big Sky Ski Resort, Bridger Bowl, Red Lodge, and Big Mountain attract many skiers seeking Montana's quality powder.

Butte, Montana is a place like no other. Once a booming mining city, walking through the city of Butte feels like walking on a movie set from an earlier time. Butte also hosts the Montana Folk Festival in summer. Check out the Mining Museum and the Clark Mansion.

Philipsburg and Virginia City offer a unique view of the old Wild West. Stop by the candy shops.

The Museum of the Rockies in Bozeman, Montana, is renowned for its large fossil collection and influential paleontologist Jack Horner.

Visit the Battlefield of the Little Bighorn, also known as Custer's Last Stand. It was here that the Lakota Sioux, Northern Cheyenne, and Arapaho defeated the troupes of General Custer. Visitors can see the graves of fallen soldiers and a museum in the visitor's center. Outside of Billings, at Pompey's Pillar, William Clark inscribed his name on this unique geological feature. Today, this marking stands as one of the only remnants from Lewis, Clark, and the Corps of Discovery on their route across the continent. The pillar also features Native American petroglyphs. With twelve different tribes of Native Americans, Montana's history stretches way before the pioneers. Travelers can also see many remnants of the old pioneering days scattered across Montana.

So come visit the Treasure State, Big Sky Country, Montana. Whether camping, fishing, skiing, swimming, or enjoying a night in the town, Montana is a perfect place to visit. I have lived in many different places, but I will always consider myself a Montanan.